

Massachusetts

Achievement of Critical Health Outcomes by Culturally Tailored Prevention and Control Strategies for Diabetes in Latinos

Public Health Problem

The prevalence of diabetes in Latinos in Massachusetts is almost 1.5 times that of whites in the state. The Greater Lawrence Family Health Center reported that for Latino patients, disparities in diabetes prevalence largely occurred among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. The prevalence of diabetes was 13.7 percent among Puerto Ricans and 9.1 percent among Dominicans as compared with 5 percent among other Latinos (similar to that for the general population in Lawrence).

Taking Action

The REACH 2010 Latino Health Project's Community Action Plan acted to address the high prevalence of diabetes among these two groups. Action included both community-based strategies to educate people about diabetes control and changes to the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center that improved the access of these patients to primary care. Culturally tailored prevention strategies included: intergenerational exercise through the YWCA; media outreach; church involvement; education about children's diabetes through the Lawrence Teen Coalition, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Family Services, Inc.; nutrition education and modeling through the Lawrence Senior Center, Merrimack Valley Nutrition Project, and Home Health Visiting Nurses' Association (VNA); and culturally tailored empowerment groups.

Implications and Impact

Preliminary data from Latino community residents with diabetes who are patients of the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center show dramatic improvements in control of high blood glucose and high blood pressure control between 2001 and 2003. Hemoglobin A1c (blood sugar) measures below 7.0 improved 8.7 percent (from 20.7 percent to 22.5 percent); systolic blood pressure below 130 mm Hg improved by 17.5 percent (from 53.6 percent to 63 percent); and diastolic blood pressure below 80 mm Hg improved 14.4 percent (from 69.6 percent to 79.6 percent).

Several measures of care also improved substantially from 2001 to 2003. Percent of patients referred for eye exams increased from 50.6 percent to 64 percent (a relative increase of 26.5 percent); percent receiving a microalbumin screen increased from 46.1 percent to 69.7 percent (a relative increase of 51.2 percent); percent for which aspirin was prescribed increased from 50.6 percent to 62.9 percent (a relative increase of 24 percent); percent whose smoking status was reviewed increased from 27 percent to 66.3 percent (a relative increase of 145.5 percent); and percent whose activity status was ascertained increased from 42.7 percent to 74.2 percent (a relative increase of 73.8 percent).

Contact Information

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Massachusetts

Increasing Knowledge of HIV Prevention Among Haitians

Public Health Problem

Haitians bear a disproportionate burden of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in Massachusetts and account for 18 percent of all pediatric AIDS cases. The percentage of reported AIDS cases in Massachusetts among Haitians is 6 times the proportion of Haitians in the state. The proportion of women among Haitians with AIDS is very high compared with the proportion of women in the general population of Massachusetts. Among persons who had AIDS in Massachusetts as of September 1999, 13 percent were born outside the United States and 75 percent were born in Haiti.

Taking Action

To meet the challenges of this public health crisis, the Boston REACH coalition implemented a community action plan to address prevention of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among Haitians in Boston. Central actions included: interventions targeted to small groups, with specialized workshops reaching Haitian men, women, youth, couples, those with HIV, and new immigrants; a media campaign with dissemination of culturally and linguistically appropriate messages about HIV through Haitian radio and print; training and technical assistance for coalition partners to provide Haitian health professionals with the tools to effectively serve their constituents and to build the capacity of small Haitian community-based organizations in the metropolitan Boston area; and training on Haitian culture and health beliefs for non-Haitian health care providers serving Haitians.

Haitian faith leaders and media leaders were identified by the community as playing an important role in the lives of Haitians. These potential “agents of change” are, for the first time, becoming engaged in HIV prevention activities in their community.

Implications and Impact

Early outcomes show an increase in knowledge and awareness of modes of HIV/AIDS transmission and of self-protective behaviors to prevent HIV transmission across all targeted groups. The coalition also has made significant progress in creating an environment for dialogue and in assessing shortcomings in the fight against HIV.

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